

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 22, 2005**

Members Present: Morris, Carroll, Harden, Kitson, Lank, Lardizzone, Newstadt, Spitzfaden, Timberman, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Endres, Ennis, Magner and Thompson

Staff Present: Davila and Williams

Guests: Dave White (DOL), Ret Maj. T.E. Kelly (Newark Memorial Day Parade), Ron Sage (MOAA), Dean Reid (DVH)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Chairman Morris opened the meeting by introducing Karen Williams and students from the Lake Forest High School. The students discussed things they do each year to honor veterans and presented a check to Chairman Morris for the Veterans Home fund. Chairman Morris introduced the new Veterans Service Officer in-training, Mr. John Williams. Mr. Williams provided a short bio. Chairman Morris spoke about the responses he received as a result of an article submitted to the newspaper on Veterans Day.

Mr. Reid reported on the trip that Mr. Davila, himself and others took to Tennessee in order to learn more about the running of their Veterans Homes and he entertained questions.

Mr. White informed everyone that the Department of Labor (DOL) has grants and programs to help incarcerated veterans. He also reminded everyone that the DOL has programs for veterans who are returning from war and need assistance.

Mr. Davila reported that money is given to the Listening Post - Lower Delaware (LP Lo-Del) in a grant to provide outreach services to incarcerated veterans.

Ret Maj. Kelly spoke about the Newark Memorial Day Parade and the need for financial assistance. Donations may be sent to Memorial Day Parade Committee, PO Box 390, Newark, DE 19715 or call Linda Burns at 302-366-7110 ext 142.

MOTION BY HARDEN TO ACCEPT OCTOBER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY LANK, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Newstadt reported that the Northern Family Advisory Cemetery Committee (FACC) will meet this evening at 6:00 PM and repeated that they were planning to reduce the meetings to two a year, with the option to call a special meeting if necessary. Mr. Davila reported on the renovations being done at the Northern Cemetery and the anticipated expansion at the Southern Cemetery. A Cemetery report was distributed to each Commissioner. He also reported on the status of the electronic imaging system for DD Form 214's and answered questions.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Newstadt requested names of those who will be attending the Memorial Day Service at the Northern Cemetery to assist him with hosting the event.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll called attention to handouts: Compensation and DIC, Veterans' Home Construction Budget, and Nason Construction; he briefly spoke about each one. He also reported on the timeframe for hiring of the necessary staff for the new Veterans Home. The Veterans Home dedication is scheduled for December 7, 2006. He announced a meeting with the Milford City Council at the Town Hall on Monday, December 5, 2005, 7:30 PM, to present the letter of appreciation and plaque. Commissioner Carroll reported that as of today, the total in the Veterans Home fund is \$155,933.49. He also reported on renovations at the VA Hospital and the need for money to buy new TVs for the hospital.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Lardizzone reported that the meeting with Terry Spence is still on hold. Chairman Morris asked for an update on what legislation was still open. Mr. Davila reported that there is legislation on the consolidation of DD Form 214s, obtaining retirement time for veterans who worked for the State and served in the military after 1 July 1976, and offering a total tax exemption on military retiree pay. Chairman Morris requested a list of all bill numbers and a short title.

PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lardizzone reported John Williams was hired as the Veterans Service Officer for New Castle County and John Crocket was hired as the Conservation Tech I for the Northern Cemetery. There are no other vacant positions.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Commissioner Kitson reported that he is still gathering information on Delaware's memorials.

HOME DEDICATION

No report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

No report.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Lank (MOWW) – Thanked everyone for their participation in the Bridge Ceremony and felt it went very well. He wanted to extend an invitation by the MOWW in Philadelphia to attend a very special event on December 1, 2005 (provided flyer). He also reported that the MOWW has expressed an interest in flying an organizational flag at the Cemetery.

Carroll (MOPH) – Reported that the organization feels that the Purple Heart stamp will be lost when the Post Office increases postage. A letter has been sent to the Post Master General requesting that the stamp receive the same recognition as the U. S Flag stamp and should continue to be available. They have asked their membership to send letters to the Post Master General to support this request.

Lardizzone (DAV) – Thanked all the organizations for their donations toward buying a van; they received \$8,330. Senator Bayh (D-IN) wants to do away with the House and Senate Armed Services Committee so all the organizations are going to air their grief about this issue.

Newstadt (JWV) – JWV presented a check for \$250 to assist DAV in getting a new van. He reported that he will be out of state for most of January-March 2006 and Sherri Taylor has his contact information if you need to reach him.

Spitzfaden (MOAA) – He reported that his Chapter had a meeting last Saturday and there were questions about the prices quoted in the Nason hand-out and discussion followed.

Harden (WAVES) – Her organization will meet on December 3, 2005, and she will tell them about her authorizing the flag in the chapel to be put outside until they can raise funds to purchase two more.

Webb (VVA) – Webb reported that the VVA will be selling hot dogs at the Christiana Boscov's on Black Friday to raise money for the handicapped kids' baseball team that they are involved in.

Kitson (VFW) – They had their Red, White and Blue Gala (Operation Uplink Fundraiser) on November 12, 2005, and raised \$40,000 for phone cards. Next year it will be held the first weekend in December so as not to coincide with Veterans Day.

Morris (American Legion) – They are holding a going away party for their past Commander.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There had been discussion last meeting about a Run/Walk marathon that had been presented to the Commission at one time, Chairman Morris looked into the matter and the event never came full circle. Mr. Davila reported that the organizer was no longer with the state, but the event could still be organized at a later date for fundraising. Chairman Morris addressed the reports from the Service Officers and Cemetery and discussion followed. Commissioner Carroll questioned the procedure if an organization did not already have a flag pole at the Northern Cemetery and wanted to place one there. Chairman Morris stated that the organization would pay the cost of both the flag pole and the flags and discussion followed. Chairman Morris commented that in January the General Assembly will start again and the Commission needs to start gathering information to present to the Veterans Affairs Committees. Mr. Davila suggested that any organization sending forth legislation also provide a copy to him so it can be included in his report.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Lank brought up the issue of ceremonial procedures for Memorial Day and Veterans Day and discussion followed.

MOTION BY HARDEN THAT THE VETERANS ORGANIZATION HOSTING THE MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY AT THE CEMETERY BE ROTATED ON A YEARLY BASIS, SECONDED BY LANK, MOTION CARRIED.

Chairman Morris reported that the VA is considering offering space at the Hospital to be leased out to other organizations for either veteran or non-veteran care. The Hospital director asked for feedback from the organizations. There was discussion and it was decided that each Commissioner take the issue to their organization and report back at the next meeting.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Commissioner Newstadt brought up the issue of the VA not honoring prescriptions from outside doctors which is causing a long delay for low category veterans to be seen and get their prescription. Mr. Davila explained the VA prescription drug program. Commissioner Newstadt further questioned why the VA would not accept Medicare. Mr. Davila clarified the Medicare federal program vis-à-vis VA. Chairman Morris made reference to his article in the newspaper and reminded the Commissioners that they need to let the public know about the things the Commission does.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: December 20, 2005 (11:00 AM) / Holiday Party (12:30 PM)

LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE

ADJOURNED